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ABSTRACT

In fall 1993, 13 graduate students at Boston College (Massachusetts) completed a seminar entitled Administrative Theory and Leadership. This paper examines the students' perspectives on the interplay between theories of educational leadership and the narratives of practicing administrators. As part of their assigned coursework, each of the students conducted interviews with two practicing administrators about their definitions of the terms "leadership," "administration," and "management." A total of 24 interviews, the work of 12 students, were reviewed. The narrative analysis indicated that the practicing administrators viewed leadership and administration as different concepts; they recognized the existence of a chasm between rhetoric and reality, particularly in the domain of ethics; and they expressed skepticism about the usefulness of administrative theories. It is concluded that administrative theories and knowledge need to consider the institutional context in which they exist. Programs of administrator education need to include a "pedagogy of possibility," which starts with field work and student-faculty learning. Contains 46 references. (LMI)

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Theory and Practice of Leadership: Students' Perspectives

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Paper presented at the Annual Conference of the
National Council of Professors of Educational Administration

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Introduction

Last autumn thirteen graduate students at Boston College took a seminar entitled "Administrative Theory and Leadership." In this paper, I examine the students' perspectives on the interplay between theories of educational leadership and the narratives of practicing administrators. First, I show how such an endeavor builds upon contemporary understandings of professional preparation. Second, I outline the content and the assignments for the seminar. In particular I describe the assignment that gave rise to this paper -- interviews with practicing administrators about theories of administration and leadership. Third, I examine the narratives of the practicing administrators. I focus on one aspect of the narrative data -- how practitioners define and distinguish the terms "leadership," "administration," and "management." Fourth, I summarize each student's perspective and then identify convergent themes. Finally, I describe the pedagogical implications of my study, the ramifications for the professoriate, and directions for future research.

Professional preparation

An epistemology of practice (Schön 1983; 1987) provides the theoretical foundation for contemporary professional preparation programs in the United States. It is fashionable these days to speak of a paradigm shift from positivism to phenomenology, from the modern era to the post-modern age. While the paradigm shift affects intellectual life generally it has marked professional or applied scholarship most powerfully. With its stress on context and individual experience, phenomenological theory is better equipped to apprehend the exigencies of practice than either the pre-modern tendency toward an essentialist world view or the modern notion of scientific objectivity.

Schön's notion of the "epistemology of practice" gives applied knowledge respectability. Professionals, he claims, exercise a "knowing-in action," a complex and often profound way of viewing reality. In the recent past, knowing-in-action remained implicit because the reigning positivistic paradigm, what Schön terms "technical rationality," made no allowance for

subjectivity. Today the self is seen as a valuable source of insight; therefore knowledge about experience, "reflection-on-action" is legitimized. Since the world of practice is neither predictable nor rational, the calm recollections of rarefied academia must be integrated with the exigencies of field-based practice under the tuteledge of a competent "coach." Like Paolo Freire (1970) Schön eschews a banking model of learning in which objective principles are presented acontextually by hierarchical authority. Like Michael Polanyi (1958), he dignifies personal knowledge as worthy of scholarly attention. This democratization of knowledge has opened up new avenues of inquiry: action research, personal narrative and ethnographic observation, to name just a few.

In both curriculum and instruction, programs of professional preparation reflect the epistemology of practice. Field-based practica are given high priority and come early on in programs: first-year medical students make hospital rounds; beginning nurses care for patients; those preparing for careers as counselors spend hours in pre-practica observing and reflecting; novice seminarians take on ministerial duties. Clinical-pastoral education is a requirement in most U.S. seminaries across a range of denominations. While studying theology, students undergo an extended period of pastoral experience, usually in a hospital, under the guidance of a trained mentor who directs systematic reflection alone and in groups. For example, as aspiring Catholic clergy confront a wide array of circumstances, they are asked to explore in response to situations they encounter principles of morals, scripture, sacramental theology, spirituality, canon law, and counselling psychology along with the ethos of the institution and the cultural background of the person involved, especially if it is different than their own. Contrary to conventional wisdom, experiential learning can and must employ exacting scholarship and rigorous thought. Classroom life independent of field work has changed also due to a wide array of simulatory activities. Case studies, for example, perfected especially in the schools of law and business at Harvard University, are widely used.

Nowhere has the epistemology of practice had a greater impact than in the preparation of school personnel. Once again, appreciation of context and personal knowledge changes the intellectual landscape. Constructivism is a reigning philosophy. As a result, intensified and prolonged field work has replaced prescriptive methods courses, student journals supplant the

Taxonomy of Educational Objectives and instead of multiple choice objective examinations students prepare eclectic and impressionistic portfolios. Quantifiable instruments of evaluation, often plagued by the ersatz objectivity that stigmatized the discipline of education, are no longer best practice. In schools, evaluation has been replaced by supervision, an artistic collaborative effort among peers to enhance personal expertise through experimentation in a safe and nurturing environment. In an important recent development in the area of supervision, shared reflection on teachers' personal narratives became "...the grounds for conscious theory making, problem-solving, and decision making" (Woods, 1992, p. 549).

In a recent study, Edwards and Wingate (1994) applied Wood's method of narrative analysis to understand better the dilemmas and values of practicing principals in their school settings. Narratives not only reveal the exigencies of practice but they reveal how those in the field make meaning of their work and their lives more generally. Problem-based education, a multi-disciplinary reflection on the intractible dilemmas school leaders encounter (Bridges, 1992), helps to bring complex interpretations of experience into the classroom.

Post-modern approaches to the epistemology of practice allow deepest beliefs to become part of the conversation about schools. At one time educational leaders neglected "...the larger, more critical topics and put stress on technical rather than social, political and moral issues" (Purpel, 1989, p. 2). Today, researchers and theoreticians are focusing on the ethical dimensions of school leadership (Barth, 1991; Beck, 1994; Capper 1993; Craig, 1993; Hodgkinson, 1991; Sergiovanni, 1992; Starratt, 1990; 1994). Feminist perspectives have been particularly important in bringing crucial questions of purpose and equity to center stage (Noddings, 1992).

Educational administration reflects a broader trend toward ethics and collegial governance (Whitehead & Whitehead, 1991; Lashley *et al*, 1994). Jay Conger's recently-published collection *Spirit at Work* (1994), expands the notion of the ethical to include a spirituality of leadership. In a secular, individualistic culture in which there is very little consensus on what constitutes the good, school administrators in particular have the Herculean task of defining and enforcing core values. In the past, the education establishment aimed to form and encourage ethical leaders. Today there is a concomitant demand to form and encourage leaders of ethical institutions.

To that end, ED 755 attempted to bridge the yawning gap between theory and practice in accordance with the recommendation of the National Commission for the Principalship (1990, p. 17) that courses "...reflect the outcomes of a task analysis of the principalship as well as a conceptual model of the principalship...involving focus group processes as well as deductive analysis processes. And the primary data source would be principals and their immediate supervisors." This curriculum eschews a purely theoretical approach "...lest the complexities of the situation become blurred."

ED755 Administrative Theory and Leadership

While the particularities of ED755 are available for close scrutiny elsewhere [see Appendix 1], several broad themes warrant attention here. The course began with a theoretical examination of the traditional epistemology of practice along with current developments (Schön, 1990, 1991; Capper, 1993b). We then looked at the ramifications of the philosophical paradigm shift for professional life (Boyd, 1992; Conger, 1989; Manasse, 1986; Rost, 1991). Next, we moved from a discussion of leadership generally to the historical development of models of educational administration (Beck & Murphy, 1993; Bolin & Panaritis, 1992; Greenfield, 1993; Sergiovanni, 1992; Starratt, 1991; Tyack, 1988). Since so much of the current literature concerns the ethics of administration, we then moved to a case methodology. First, we discussed particular cases about ethical crises in schools (Strike *et al.*, 1988). Then we looked at the contexts in which ethical cases arise: race and ethnicity (Greene, 1993; Reyes, Velez and Peña, 1993), social class (Parker & Shapiro, 1993), gender (Marshall, 1992; Shakeshaft, 1993), disability (Bishop, Foster & Kimberlee, 1993), sexual orientation (Sears, 1993) and rural education (Schmuck & Schmuck, 1993). Concurrent with reading and class discussion, students wrote two essays, the first concerned the applicability of business models of leadership to schools; the second was a biographical essay.

The major project for ED 755 forms the basis of this paper. After having studied theories of leadership, students prepared an interview guide to see where the narrative of practitioners intersects with the literature they had just read. Each student prepared questions individually and we took one class session to share perspectives. Using notes from class discussions and

students' papers I devised the interview guide found in Appendix 2. Each student interviewed two administrators and 12 of the 13 students made their work available to me. I chose 16 of the 24 interviews. I did not analyze the narratives of administrators in higher education and I used only those texts that had accurate verbatim transcripts. I coded and analyzed administrators' narratives but for the purposes of this paper I chose one question to review in depth For their final assignment students reviewed all interview transcripts, compared them to the literature they had read in the course and created their own definition of leadership. I review their work individually and make a general statement about convergent themes.

Narratives of Practicing Administrators

> Fads sweep back and forth...in the midst of all this you have to have a North star...you have got to have a North Star of some kind that you hold to and you keep your eye on and with which you evaluate the temporary phenomena.
>
> -Veteran suburban high-school principal

A common and predictable theme in students' interviews with practitioners was disdain for theories and programs of educational administration. Otherwise, the data contained a wide array of questions and a dizzying range of topics, especially since the interviewees were semi-structured, allowing for improvisation [see Appendix 2]. As an example of administrator narrative and because of current interest in redefining the field of educational administration (Northeast Common Market Project, 1993; Thomson, 1993), I chose to focus on the eighth interview question, "In your opinion, are leadership, administration and management the same thing? If you see them as different, please explain."

Many practitioners felt that administration, management and leadership are part of a whole. Interviewee #11, a man in his late 30s who is principal of an urban Catholic elementary school put it this way:

> Clearly you can't be purely a visionary leader without worrying about day-to-day operations, i.e. Is so-and-so in school today? Is that teacher in school today? Are they teaching the lessons that the curriculum is calling for? Are people paying their bills?

> Are we paying our bills? I mean clearly there has to be a balance here.

Interviewee #6., a man in his mid 40s who is a suburban public elementary principal said, "If you're not a manager and you're not an administrator, you're not going to be a leader." Interviewee #3. a man in his mid 50s who is headmaster of a suburban independent elementary remarked:

> I mean you could have clarity of vision that would sort of rank you on the amount of libido but if you can';t get, you know, the bills paid and have people arrive on time and have schedules that work, you would probably not get far. So I try to think of myself as a good manager, although I had to work at that - that's not the thing I do best - but I try to take that part of my job seriously and not let it go because it will ultimately do me in."

Finally,. interviewee #9, a man in his mid 50s who is director of instruction at a large urban middle school said, "Administration, I think, is the overall responsibility, in our case, of the building and that roll would fall into the daily work of the principal who should be exerting educational leadership as well as personal leadership."

Practitioners differed considerably in their definition of administration. For two, administration entails dealing with outside agencies, and superiors, to get necessary resources. Interviewee #1, a woman in her mid 40s who is principal of an urban public elementary school said that:

> ...it has to do with budget. You have to argue your case to secure appropriate resources, to know the inner bureaucracies of the school system. I have great advantages because I was in the central office. A lot of principals have never been anywhere but in a school and you're really handicapped. I'm amazed at the lack of just knowledge that people have like who to call when, when to be nice, when to have a temper tantrum, when to hold your breath and say no, when to bite the bullet and say OK."

Interviewee #2, a woman in her mid 50s, is principal of an urban Catholic elementary school. She echoed the sentiments of #1: "Administration is dealing with the pastor and people in the Archdiocesan office...I don't know if it's a quality, but you have to be a politician because you have to have good relationships with people in the community and also with the alumni and with the pastors and with the archdiocese."

Whereas #1 and #2 believe that administration concerns the mobilization of external resources, two others concur but see administration *ad intra* not *asdextra*. Interviewee #4, the principal of a public urban high school who is in his mid 40s, said that "Administration is really the mobilizing of all the resources into a common frame to promote whatever the goals of the school are, so administration is really to facilitate teaching and learning, as I view it." Interviewee #8, a woman in her mid 40s who is department chair in an urban high school, remarked: "I think administration is a little less than the that [ability to inspire others to do their best], that it's simply the designation of duties to the appropriate people."

While one practitioner, Interviewee #12, a man in his mid 50s who is principal of an urban public elementary school, saw administration as synonymous with leadership, two others believed that it is synonymous with management. #12 stated, "When I look at administration I think administration and leadership. I think they dovetail with one another. I administer a school. When I think of administration I'm thinking of the human aspect and the type of leadership. I would like to think that I have an open leadership, a leadership that is one that accepts the points and views and thoughts of others." In contrast, Interviewee #10, a man in his early 40s who is principal at a suburban Catholic high school, stated, "Administering -- that's a lot of paper shuffling. making sure that the school is functioning properly, that phone calls are being returned by people. There's the paper for the Xeroxes for the teachers. Are messages being given out at the appropriate time? I think that's more the administration part." Interviewee #5, a man in his mid 40s who is department chair at a suburban high school, felt the same way, "I don't see too much difference between managing and administration. I look at them as somewhat the same."

Where there was considerably divergence in the definition of administration, with one exception practitioners saw defined management in the same way. In defining the word "management", #8 reiterated her concern about the use of human resources: "I believe it is a third category whereby you manage people and resources and time and I see that closely ties up with organizational skills." The other practitioners felt that management is practically necessary but mundane and tedious. #2 remarked, "When you think of management you think of more of a business. You are a business manager." #4 stated, "Management is just keeping the ship running. In

other words, the ink runs out of the zerox machine, you put more ink in. You need to go and hire a teacher, you go and hire a teacher." #12 claimed, "When I look at management I think of the building, the physical structure." For #1, management concerns "...the things that we are supposed to be turning in to cover the system...I have to see that they get done." For #5, "...a manager basically, I think, is able to run things on a day-today basis, maintaining the status quo." Interviewee #13, a man in his late 40s who is principal of urban elementary school, described management as "...basically administrative responsibilities such as compiling and interpreting test scores. developing homework center policy, accounting for the free lunch program." Interviewee #14, a man in his early 50s who is principal of an urban elementary school, sums up the prevailing sentiment:

> Management has a negative term to it. That means you manage certain things and control them. You can be a manager without being a leader. We need managers, I'm not knocking them. There are people who need to handle the details, who need to cross all the t's and dot all the i's and add up all the columns and collect all the files and fill in all the forms and on and on -- nauseating as far as I'm concerned personally. I don't want to degrade that but, I could never do that., sit in the office all day and play with the computer. I could never do it but someone has to do that, otherwise we'd have chaos. The budget would fall apart and things wouldn't get ordered. That's management. But it has very little to do with success as a principal in a public school.

It is not surprising that many universities have changed the title of departments from "Educational Administration" to "Educational Leadership," for it is the latter that clearly has the most importance. Practitioners' narratives confirm the central insight on leadership that Richard Sennett developed in his book *Authority* (1981). At one time leadership came from positional authority: "I am right because I am the teacher, the principal, the superintendent, the doctor, the professor, the priest." Today, positions alone do not insure authority, for authority is personal. In fact, a cynic would claim that those with the position must work especially hard to exercise leadership. #9 pointed out that leadership is not the same as administration: "Leadership can come from just about anyone

Leadership can come from the most junior member of your staff. I think this is something that evolves. Part of it is style. Part of it is how your peers look at you and so on. Not every administrator is a great leader. Not every manager is a great leader." Administrators and managers must lead by personal example. #10 remarked: "I believe that when you're in a setting with everybody and you try to show them that you're willing to work as hard as they work, and that's why they're picking up a mop when you're in an open house and some boys are mopping the floor, well you grab the mop and work. It's as basic as that. So they realize that you are the principal but you're willing to work side-by-side." #2 made the same point by telling a story. Her school was about to enter into a partnership with a local teacher-training college and the teachers felt defensive. The principal taught them through example:

> People are just terrified when anybody from the outside comes in the school system and they were upset that X College wanted to be our partner. It sounds very stupid, but you have to understand it's part of the culture of the school system. Uh, so I was doing the buses by myself at 3:10. And I told this to the teachers to try to model for them that I too make mistakes. And it was a rainy day and there was a little kid in the first grade last year, now he's in our second grade, who is developmentally on a two-year old level because he'd been so severely sexually and physically abused as a toddler. He couldn't talk, you know, much more than a two-year old would talk. So, he was trying to put on his sweater and his little slicker and he had a graham cracker in his and he said, "Miss X, no coat on." And I looked at him and I said -- now I'm trying to make sure everybody is safe in this little lobby area here and I have everybody here and I have the mother running the bus group and everything, and I look down at him and I said, "Well, [Johnny], maybe if you hadn't been fooling around for the last twenty minutes you could have gotten your coat on." This little Haitian girl is in his class, she looks up at me and she said, "Miss X, [Johnny] wasn't fooling around, he doesn't know how to put his coat on, but I do and I can help him." And I said to the teachers, "See now, I should never have been that harsh with [Johnny]. She had

learned the very thing we had been trying to teach all the kids. I had been talking about it, but she's the one who actually did it." So, my leadership style is to be able to show the teachers that even I too can make mistakes. And I will learn from them. I try to model that. I guess that would be my leadership style."

Not only do leaders teach by example, but they demonstrate their dedication to the task at hand. #8 spoke in generic terms, "I think that in order to be a good leader, you have to demonstrate a commitment yourself to the position you assume. You have to care about it deeply and people have to see that. They have to see that in your daily actions. I believe that is the bottom line." In the case of schools, leadership boils down to a dedication to the welfare of children. #14 explained:

> Leadership is a dynamic. It's not a place. And certainly it should come with the position, that's true. The higher up you are in an organization the more you can exert some kind of leadership over folks but the least effective you are in terms of kids, I might add. Although we think we're doing great things and sometimes we are, the real important thing is what happens in the little interactions between kids and teachers every day, thousands happen in this building and that's where education occurs....There is negative leadership too, the whole cult dynamic. They had a mission and a vision and a person showed leadership that led to destruction of people unfortunately. So I think leadership is a dynamic and a lot of people can exert it and encourage it.

Interviewee #13 was more concrete. For him, leadership comes down to "...working on the school improvement plan, organizing and directing professional development for the staff, involvement with child studies and children with special needs,."

Though a number of practitioners elsewhere in the interviews referred to "vision" as a "buzzword" and a "fad"' #7 claimed that "...leadership has something to do with a spirit and a vision and imagination and communication skills and believability. It's a set of personal characteristics, which some managers have and some don't." #1 called leadership "the vision part" in which one models "being a reflective practitioner."

Two practitioners pointed out that vision is dead without keen persuasive powers. #4 remarked, " Leadership is the ability to make the difference, it's the ability to inspire and motivate people." # 5 gave more detail:

> I think leadership refers to a person who has some directions and visions and who is basically able to sell those ideas to someone else, is able to persuade them. It is great to have terrific ideas and have a foundation and, uh, theory but if you can't convince the staff of those ideas, those innovations, those directions, it's not going to be any good. So I'm saying a leader is able to do that, and I'm not saying that I do that to the extent that I'd like to be able to do it, but that's how I look at it as a good leader does.

Interviewee #10 pointed out that to be a good leader also entails the relinquishment of power and preferences:

> Essential for leadership in the school is...having self-confidence that you cant hide behind your decisions. It's being fair and consistent because everybody looks to you, and if you play favorites, then it's going to be well known throughout the community that you like a certain segment of the community and they can do what they want. And you have to be willing to listen to people and set aside again your own personal agenda where you have certain feelings, but just because it's good for you doesn't mean it's good for the community.

The one quote about leadership that received the most attention in students' essays picks up the initial theme is this section: leadership is personal and not positional. Interviewee #7 put it eloquently:

> The leadership that counts is not the leadership that depends on where you are on the [organizational] chart. It's that leadership that people grant you themselves because of their appreciation or approval of who you are, what your skills are, what your motives are. It's granted to you by the people on the lower level of the chart and some people who are in management positions never do become leaders because they haven't got what it is that attracts the voluntary support of the people who work for the.,

They get more money and they've got a longer title and the rug is thicker on their floor, but they are not leaders."

Students' Perspectives

Twelve students gave me permission to use their work for this project. Each student had his/her own method of analyzing the interview data.

In her definition of leadership student #1, an experienced teacher in an urban Catholic elementary school who aspires to the principalship, simply quoted interviewee #7. She identified five convergent themes in the narratives: 1. The need to articulate a vision; 2. Empowerment of staff; 3. The creation of an atmosphere of collegiality; 4. The centrality of ethical values in adult relationships; 5. No respect for administrator training programs.

Student #2 is an experienced elementary school teacher in a public suburban elementary school who aspired to be a principal. She divided her paper into four areas: 1. Differences between administration, management and leadership; 2. Resistance to labels and buzzwords; 3. Centrality of self-knowledge; 4. A stress on the "sensitivity to the dignity and uniqueness of each person in the school" (Starratt, 1991, p. 196). She felt that her fourth point was well documented by narrative statements such as: "the best for the kids," "sharing ideas," "colleagues," "respect," and "fairness." She developed a six-point definition of leadership:

1. Leaders must know who they are, They must do the work of defining themselves, investigate their motives and articulate their dreams. They must come to peace with who they are. It is through this work that they will develop a sense of confidence that will allow them to begin to lead.
2. Leaders must be ethical and they must care. They must have a sense of what is right and what is wrong. Although their jobs are situational, leaders must identify core values that cannot be compromised from situation to situation. Leaders must not be afraid to use moral authority to lead.
3. Leaders must have the ability to inspire. They must have a vision that people will want to follow. A vision that flows from moral authority and caring would be very magnetic.

4. Leaders must listen. Listening is the key to knowing where the staff students and parents are. Listening gives the leader the information to construct their plan for change. It tells the leader when and how to be supportive and when and how to share ideas. Listening is the fuel for reflecting and reframing situations.

5. Leaders must have a strong knowledge base. Leaders must know about adult and child development, curriculum and finance. Leaders must not be afraid to seek answers to things they do not know.

6. Leaders must have an eye on the future. They must be proactive.

Student #3 is a university administrator. Based on the narratives and the literature he identified four themes: 1. Know thyself (Conger, 1989 and Schön, 1987); 2. Visibility (Beck and Murphy, 1993) and Burns' transactional leadership "such leadership occurs when one person takes the initiative in making contact with others for the purpose of an exchange of valued things" (Rost, 1991, p. 61); 3. Consensus and empowerment (Sergiovanni, 1993; Conger 1989); 4. Manager, coach, mentor (Schön, 1987). His definition of leadership: "The most important ability in leadership is the ability to convey the notion that the contributions of each member of the group are vital to the overall mission, and that the pursuit of that mission will benefit all members of the group."

Student #4 is an experienced administrator in a public urban high school. He identified for major themes: 1. The challenges administrators face in the 1990s varies widely by context; 2. Staff perception is an essential trait of leadership; 3. The qualities necessary for leaders in the 1990s are knowledge of the needs of diverse learners (Beck and Murphy, 1993; Rost 1991), commitment (Conger, 1989) and respect (Sergiovanni 1993). 4. The term "empowerment", a predominant buzzword in the literature, was hardly mentioned in the narratives. #4 defined the leader as: "...an educational explorer who looks into the future and tries something new, cognizant of what is on the horizon and formulates new ideas, new methods, new goals. The leader is not stagnant. Leadership should be a constantly evolving concept whereby the experiences which constitute your continually

building repertoire force you to update and sometimes alter your educational philosophy."

Student #5 is an experience teacher in a public suburban high school who aspires to be a department chairman or a principal. He had four foci: 1. The broad diversity of visions in the narratives and the literature (Capper, 1993); 2. The centrality of commitment (Sergiovanni, 1993); 3. The importance of communication (Schön, 1991); 4. The centrality of decision-making and the utility of a wide diversity of cases in class (Strike et al, 1988). He defined educational leadership as "...the directed action toward change by a person who has knowledge, compassion, wisdom and guts."

Student #6 is a young man who aspires to be a university administrator. He concentrated on three areas: the importance of empowerment of one's staff (Sergiovanni 1993), leading by example, and the importance of articulating by words and actions the purpose of the institution. Acknowledging that Rost (1991) uncovered 110 different definitions of leadership, he highlighted "communication skills, belief in a mission, administrating skills, strong moral foundation, listening skills, empowerment and charism."

Student #7 is a young but experienced teacher in an urban Catholic elementary school who aspires to the principalship. She divided her essay into four areas: 1. General statements about leadership are problematic because of the importance of context -- urban, suburban, by ethnicity and socio-economic status; 2. Practitioners did not have accurate job descriptions; 3. There is no consensus on what defines the good, however, "they [interviewees] practice moral and ethical leadership every day, they just do not label it so." 4. Leadership consists not only in vision -- determining the direction of the organization, but also in strategy -- leading the organization in that direction (Manasse, 1986).

Student #8 is an experienced principal of a suburban Catholic elementary school. She divided the practitioners into four groups by the means of entry into the profession, if they were asked into it, sought it, or moved up step by step. She then looked at self-perceived qualities, qualities necessary for leadership in the 1990s and the theory vs. practice dichotomy. She remarked that at least 50% of the practitioners were strongly dismissive of leadership theory. In her definition, "Leadership is situational, it is not

something you have but something you have the potential for having. It depends on the granting of followership" (Sergiovanni, 1993).

Student #9 is a young graduate student aspiring to a career as a teacher and administrator. He articulated five convergent themes: the changing contexts of leadership, caring about students, versatility, listening, and support of the adults in the school. He noted that charisma is important throughout, but that without hearing the voices of others in the school, assessment of followership is impossible (Conger, 1989). Finally, Capper's notions of structural-functionalism, interpretivist theory and critical theory explained the divergent world views evident in the narratives. For #9 leadership is:

> ...an intensely personal action. Everyone leads in a different way, according to their own personality. Leadership is being fair and honest. It is treating people with respect. Leadership is having a particular goal that you articulate to your staff. These administrators all have a focus goal or vision. Leadership is being able to clearly articulate that goal and making sure people understand those goals and intentions. Finally, a leader is able to convince enough people that those particular goals are worth achieving.

Student # 10 is a fairly young but experienced teacher in an urban public elementary school who aspires to the principalship. She divided her paper into three areas: 1. Patterns relating to leadership qualities and definitions; 2. Comparison and contrast between practical findings and theory; 3. The definition and identification of leadership within the perimeters of ones own philosophical and educational beliefs. She took her definition of leadership from Sergiovanni: "what a person is believes, values, dreams about, and is committed to(1992, p. 7). Marshall's article (1992) helped #10 conclude: "As a woman [I believe that] leadership consists of compassion."

Student #11 is an experienced teacher in an urban public school who aspires to be a principal. She focused on questions of ethnic and racial diversity, changing familial structures and the need for teacher empowerment in order to adapt appropriately curriculum and instruction. Though personality factors make leadership idiosyncratic, collegiality is a *sine qua non* in the articulation of a vision for the future (Manasse, 1986). In her

definition of leadership, student #9 highlighted the need for analysis of economics, demographics, teaching staff and students. She continued:

> Studying the subject in depth, and in the formal atmosphere of a university, broadens a person's perspective. It also allows him/her to choose that information which can be adapted to their specific situation. I came into this course with the lopsided opinion that being an administrator was all managerial duties and no active involvement with students, other than discipline. I now realize that an administrative role can be as vibrant and involving as a teacher's position.

Student #12 is a young university administrator. She believes that the key to leadership is a good relationship with the staff. She quotes two practitioners. One claimed that "...everyone is considered an integral part of the whole picture. Nobody's more important, whether it be administrators, the custodian, myself." Another stated, "I'm not the solver of all problems. I don't have all the answers; I don't even know all the questions. That's why we hire teachers here. We have teachers who think, we want them to take control, and if there's a problem to be solved, solve it. I'm not playing God in this office.". Capper's edited volume (1993) was particularly helpful to #12. While the principal of an ethnically diverse school described the school's motto as ,"We are many, we are one," only two practitioners mentioned gender issues, one mentioned sexual orientation and no one discussed the school's role in preserving social-class structures. Student #12 acknowledged that the majority of practitioners sought consensus among staff members. In contrast, one practitioner said it was "...stagnating to have people parroting what you want to hear." Another talked about being careful in hiring because "you don't want to have just one viewpoint." Again, Capper's work was helpful: "Congruent with the feminist post-structuralist paradigm, conflict and dissensus are not necessarily negative, and resolution should quell the conflict but should not be used as a way to squelch individual differences (1993a, p. 306). Finally, student #12 characterized the narratives as being at odds with the literature about ethics and social reconstruction. "It's not that ethical decision-making doesn't occur," she said, "the problem is that it is not reflected upon as a process [sic] and not shared with others, so that it can be a learning tool." While she categorized respect as a key element in both the narratives and cases studied in class (Strike *et al* , 1988) practitioners

overlooked the fact that social history has been one of power relationships that "...preserve societal and educational structures in their present form" (Capper, 1993a, p. 291).

It is indeed difficult to identify convergent themes in the naratives of students and , by extension, the adminsitrators they interviewed. This should not be surprising. The exigencies of practice are contextual and experiential. Given an epistemology of practice based on a phenomenological world view, one cannot expect clarity, replicability, predictability or quantifiability. Nonetheless, I find three themes that are faithful to a reading of the narratives and respond to much of the current scholarship in the field.

First, the noun "leader" is not a synonym of the noun "administrator." In contemporary culture, leadership, like authority, is personal and not positional, earned and not assumed. The description by Interviewee #7 of administrators who are not leaders bears repeating: "They get more money and they've got a longer title and the rug is thicker on their floor, but they are not leaders." This raises an important question for our discipline; are we to name our it "educational administration" or the more fashionable "educational leadership?" Does our desire to foster democratic governance, noble though it be, make our self-understanding broad and superficial? Doesn't educational leadership describe the role of all actors in schools? Teachers? Parents? Even students? Clearly good administrators are good leaders, but the knowledge base we seek must be about administration *per se.*

Second, important issues are made abstract and remote through pseudo-philosophical or pseudo-psychological jargon. Nowhere is the chasm between rhetoric and reality as wide as in the domain of ethics. The abstract terms found in the literature (vision, social reconstruction, empowerment, collegiality) become hackneyed and insipid without close and careful analysis of administrators' own description of their work using their terms. Throughout the narratives one finds comments along the lines of "I do it for the kids." The body of literature about the ethics of administration is bound to expand greatly. Unless practitioners participate in the conversation, the gap between espoused theory and theory-in-use (Argyris, 1993) will widen. In the narratives, several administrators described profoundly ethical beliefs and dilemmas in ordinary language. Later, when asked about "vision", they responded that vision-making is the job of the superintendent or the school.

Interviewee #13 put it well: "The ordinary is quite extraordinary in its ordinariness."

Third, practice stands as a critique of theory. These practitioners corroborate the skepticism about the field of educational administration that permeates the literature. Administrative theories, along with the universities that produce them, are irrelevant at best. Perhaps things will change as the positivist paradigm that reigned for so long in the field gives way to the epistemology of practice. Clearly, the "technical rational" worldview distorted reality and rendered theory useless. Leadership and administration both are contextual and idiosyncratic. The question then arises: Can university-based theory stand as a critique of practice?

Conclusion

In the first annual yearbook of the National Council of Professors of Educational Administration Reitzug and McKinney (1993) professors' and practitioners' views of educational administration. Through open-ended surveys they attempted to forge links between the field and the academy. I believe they overlooked an important phenomenon I call institutionalization. Because administration is idiosyncratic and contextual the potential is great for defensive routines, "self-reinforcing from the individual to the larger unit back to the individual (Argyris, 1993, p. 21). Absence from familiar settings does not in itself break down defensiveness. Administrators need broad categories and new perspectives. Cooper explains, "This broader knowledge discourages a narrowly professional perspective and over commitment to an employing organization. It encourages carrying out public administration as an integral part of the larger political economic, and social context. It confronts us with obligations to a more democratic society with a diverse social fabric and makes us more aware of the economic consequences of our administrative actions." (1990, p. 229). While Forsyth (1992, p. 29) rightly argues that full-time study can achieve this goal, the economics of education make intense academic experiences inaccessible. In terms of administrator preparation, we have had enough of the ideal; we need a pedagogy of possibility.

A pedagogy of possibility takes the field as its starting point. However, many students are incapable of spending time in schools outside their own,

especially for lengthy practicum or internship experiences. As a result, students' tendency toward institutionalization presents a puzzle for professors of educational administration. Part of the solution is field-based assignments similar to the one described in this paper. One way for students to encounter other settings and new perspectives is through site-based interviews with practitioners.

Traditionally student work was highly autonomous; students did research, handed in a paper to the professor, received feedback and a grade. Students rarely learned from each other. In ED755 students not only learned new perspectives through their own interviews, but learned about other administrators and their fellow students. Narratives often reveal as much about the interviewer as the interviewee. Students are the greatest resource for students.

Students are also the greatest resource for faculty. For several years I moderated a cross-denominational program for student teachers from the north and south of Ireland. The motto of one of the affiliated teacher-training colleges in Belfast is *docendo discimus*, [by teaching we learn]. ED755 was a new learning experience for me. High levels of student input and interest created stimulating seminar classes. Professors of Educational Administration must seek out every opportunity to bring the life of schools into the university so that we will continually learn through our teaching.

A fellow member of the junior faculty describes the professoriate as "academic triage" because of the enormous pressures of teaching, research, service and, increasingly, the attainment and administration of grants. ED755 provides on example of integrated teaching and research. Demands of service to practitioners, especially through professional development opportunities, may be met through field-based assigments. Both students and practitioners need to create and study narratives. In the interview process practitioners articulate implicit beliefs. This is no small matter since self-knowledge figures so prominently as a quality of leadership.

While I consider ED755 a success, more needs to be done. First, it would be helpful to devise a survey instrument about the themes generated through this study. The next round of interviews could follow up on survey results. Since context is key, recorded observations of the school environment should accompany the narratives. Moreover, interviews with staff and colleagues on-site would deepen knowledge about person's

administration and leadership because there is no leadership without "followership."

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